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UNHCR ACTIVITIES FINANCED BY VOLUNTARY FUNDS: REPORT FOR 1994-1995 AND PROPOSED PROGRAMMES AND BUDGET FOR 1996

PART IV. THE AMERICAS AND THE CARIBBEAN

Section 1 - Canada

(submitted by the High Commissioner)

GE.95- 02230

IV.1 CANADA

1. Beneficiary population

1. According to statistics provided by the Canadian Immigration and Refugee Board (IRB), some 22,000 asylum claims were submitted during 1994. This reflects a slight upward trend over 1993, during which 20,500 claims were filed, but down from 37,700 in 1992. Projections for 1995 confirm this upward trend. In a comparative study carried out by the Convention Refugee Determination Division (CRDD) of the IRB, 39 per cent of the 1993 and 1994 claimants were female and the acceptance rate for female refugee claimants was higher than for male claimants in 1992, 1993 and 1994. During 1994 the CRDD heard 19,644 claims (including backlog from the previous year) and rendered decisions on 21,666 cases. Refugee status was granted to 15,224 (70 per cent) while 6,442 (30 per cent) were rejected. A total of 3,404 claims were withdrawn or abandoned.

2. Claims by asylum-seekers from Sri Lanka and Somalia accounted for 25 per cent of all claims filed in 1994, while other large groups of asylum-seekers came from the Islamic Republic of Iran, India, Israel, Bangladesh, Pakistan, China, the Russian Federation and Guatemala. The expedited hearing process, an accelerated procedure which identifies claims considered to be sufficiently straightforward to allow for rapid, mainly positive, decision, processed 27 per cent of all decisions.

3. Refugees in Canada are eligible for, and are usually granted, permanent residence upon recognition and may apply for citizenship within three years. In 1994, 19,676 persons became eligible for permanent residence on a refugee or humanitarian basis.

2. Developments in 1994 and 1995

4. The Minister of Citizenship and Immigration announced, in July 1994, new measures to deal with an estimated 25,000 rejected asylum-seekers, of whom some 8,000 are under deferred removal orders. Failed refugee claimants who have been under a removal order for more than three years, have established themselves in Canada, have worked for at least six months since making their refugee claim and do not pose a security risk, will be allowed to apply for permanent residence. The Minister also announced in July 1994 the resumption of deportations to China, as well as to all other countries with the exception of Afghanistan, Burundi, Rwanda and Haiti, to come into force in October 1994. In addition, a special task force was set up to concentrate exclusively on tracking down and removing foreign criminals with serious convictions who had evaded removal action.

5. A significant decision was taken in 1994 by the IRB in which a Somali mother and her two minor children were granted refugee status in their separate claims of persecution as members of a social group. The daughter's case was based on the fear of female genital mutilation as persecution, and the son's was based on his fear of separation from his mother owing to child custody being the automatic right, under shariah law, of the divorced husband living in Somalia.

6. In November 1994 the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration tabled his long-term immigration strategy for the years 1995 to 2000. The immigration targets for 1995 were announced to be between 190,000 and 215,000 (compared with 250,000 for 1994) of which 24,000 to 32,000 would be refugees. Of these, approximately 10,000 will be resettled from abroad and the rest projected inland claimants.

7. In February 1995, following the budget speech which introduced massive public spending cuts, the Minister announced that every immigrant and refugee over the age of 18 applying for 'landed' status would have to pay a $Can 975 "right to landing" fee, in addition to the $Can 500 per person cost recovery fee. Loans will apparently be available on an interest-free basis to indigent applicants, but only where the applicant can demonstrate an ability to repay. The new fee structure has provoked strong criticism from refugee advocates, not only for imposing further financial hardship on refugees already in Canada, but because it risks excluding the resettlement of deserving refugees stranded abroad. The Branch Office in Canada did a survey of UNHCR offices in major resettlement countries and found that while two other asylum countries charge similar landing fees to immigrants, they exempt refugees from payment. This information has been transmitted to the Government and a response is awaited.

8. The originally approved 1995 local settlement allocation of $ 440,200 was increased due to rental increases at the Branch Office, which is shared on a 50 per cent basis with the implementing agency.

3. 1996 Country programmes

(a) Objectives

9. The country programme objectives will be similar in 1996 to those carried out in 1994 and 1995, although there will be an increasing focus on training and dissemination of refugee-related information.

(i) Local settlement

10. The Branch Office will continue to monitor the UNHCR-Canadian Council for Refugees (CCR) special pilot project and urge the Federal and Provincial Governments to keep the quotas up by accepting more UNHCR-supported cases for settlement in Canada. It will provide information to non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and sponsor groups as well as to the general population regarding UNHCR's resettlement policy and global assessment of priority resettlement needs. Input to the Women at Risk Programme policy and operations review, and location of sponsor groups for those resettlement cases referred to the Branch Office by the Resettlement Section at Headquarters and other UNHCR Branch Offices, is foreseen. Advocacy with the Federal and Provincial Governments to reinstate the Disabled Refugee Programme is a priority for 1996. Facilitation of all family reunification cases received by the Office, where family members are under UNHCR protection overseas, will also continue.

(ii) Voluntary repatriation

11. The Office will continue to assist, on a case-by-case basis, refugees who request repatriation from Canada to their countries of origin.

(iii) Public information/awareness campaign

12. Increasing emphasis will be put on training and information dissemination to refugee advocates, NGOs and IRB members. The Branch Office will continue the local production of information papers focusing on refugee issues of relevance to Canada, initiated in 1995. Implementation of the UNHCR/IRB Memorandum of Understanding signed in February 1994 will be facilitated by a Refugee Law Training Officer who joined the Branch Office in January 1995. The Training Officer will continue to take part in the pre-deployment training of Canadian peace-keepers. Another focus will be on the continued training of IRB members (country of origin information) across Canada. Presentations at different universities and institutes are foreseen as well.

(b) Proposed budgets for 1996

(i) Local settlement

13. Implementing partner staff benefit increases, in line with national practice, will result in slightly higher needs for the local settlement project under General Programmes. Assistance provided will be in the form of individual subsistence allowances to persons most in need, as well as counselling to individuals through a Durable Solutions Coordinator and four Legal Officers throughout the country.

(c) Implementing partners

14. The sole implementing partner of UNHCR under the local settlement project is CARE-Canada. Improvements have already been made with respect to costs of, and range of services provided by, CARE and these have already been reflected in the 1995 programme. The level of agency overhead costs in relation to services will continue to be negotiated in 1995 in order to obtain a decrease in charges, and changes for 1996 may still take place.

(d) Programme Delivery and Administrative Support Costs

15. Variations due to changes in budget parameters are not discussed in the subsequent analysis (Overview of UNHCR Activities, Part I (A/AC.96/845) refers).

(i) 1994 expenditure (all sources of funds)

16. The 1994 expenditure was lower than revised estimates mainly because of lower than foreseen expenditure on rent and staff related costs.

(ii) Revised 1995 requirements (all sources of funds)

17. The revised 1995 requirements are not significantly different from initial estimates.

(iii) Initial 1996 requirements (all sources of funds)

18. The 1996 Programme Delivery and Administrative Support Costs are proposed at approximately the same level as revised 1995 levels.

UNHCR EXPENDITURE IN CANADA

(in thousands of United States dollars)

1994	1995		1996	
AMOUNT OBLIGATED	ALLOCATION APPROVED BY 1994 EXCOM	PROPOSED REVISED ALLOCATION	SOURCE OF FUNDS AND TYPE OF ASSISTANCE	PROPOSED ALLOCATION/ PROJECTION
GENERAL PROGRAMMES				
10.1 a/	–	–	CARE AND MAINTENANCE	–
33.0 a/	–	–	VOLUNTARY REPATRIATION	–
424.5	440.2	457.0	LOCAL SETTLEMENT	477.7
426.7	554.1	556.5	PROGRAMME DELIVERY See Overview Tables (Part II)	535.3
894.3	**994.3**	**1,013.5**	**SUB–TOTAL OPERATIONS**	**1,013.0**
83.5	90.2	59.2	ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT See Overview Tables (Part II)	56.5
977.8	**1,084.5**	**1,072.7**	**T O T A L (1)**	**1,069.5**
SPECIAL PROGRAMMES (2)				
–	–	8.7	OTHER TRUST FUNDS ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT See Overview Tables (Part II)	8.7
0.0	**0.0**	**8.7**	**T O T A L (2)**	**8.7**
977.8	**1,084.5**	**1,081.4**	**GRAND TOTAL (1+2)**	**1,078.2**

a/ obligation incurred against Other Programmes